

I CLAIM:

1. A method of preserving harvested *Ceratomia catalpae* larvae for periods exceeding the larvae stage of *Ceratomia catalpae* for use as fishing bait, the method
5 comprising the steps of:
 - cleaning a batch of live *Ceratomia catalpae* larvae harvested from Catalpa trees to remove contaminants, including frass excreted by the *Ceratomia catalpae* larvae;
 - introducing the batch of live *Ceratomia catalpae* larvae into heated water to blanch the batch of *Ceratomia catalpae* larvae for a period longer than the time required
10 to kill the *Ceratomia catalpae* larvae;
 - cooling the batch of *Ceratomia catalpae* larvae after blanching the batch of *Ceratomia catalpae* larvae to stop cooking due to blanching the batch of *Ceratomia catalpae* larvae;
 - drying the batch of *Ceratomia catalpae* larvae; and
15 freezing the *Ceratomia catalpae* larvae.
2. The method of claim 1 wherein the batch of *Ceratomia catalpae* larvae are introduced to water at a rolling boil to blanch the batch of *Ceratomia catalpae* larvae.
3. The method of claim 2 wherein the batch of *Ceratomia catalpae* larvae are removed from the heated water prior to tearing of outer skin on the *Ceratomia catalpae*
20 larvae.
4. The method of claim 2 wherein the batch of *Ceratomia catalpae* larvae are blanched for a period of time to kill bacteria on the *Ceratomia catalpae* larvae, to brighten the color of *Ceratomia catalpae* larvae, and to toughen outer skin on the *Ceratomia catalpae* larvae.
- 25 5. The method of claim 2 wherein the batch of *Ceratomia catalpae* larvae are blanched for a period greater than 10 seconds and less than 20 seconds.
6. The method of claim 1 wherein the step of cooling the batch of *Ceratomia catalpae* larvae comprises the step of introducing the batch of *Ceratomia catalpae* larvae into an ice water bath.

7. The method of claim 6 wherein the batch of *Ceratomia catalpae* larvae are placed in the ice water bath less than 5 seconds after removal from the heated water used to blanch the batch of *Ceratomia catalpae* larvae.
8. The method of claim 1 wherein the step of drying the batch of *Ceratomia catalpae* larvae comprises the step of blotting the *Ceratomia catalpae* larvae.
9. The method of claim 1 wherein the step of drying the batch of *Ceratomia catalpae* larvae, comprises the step of heat drying at a temperature of approximately 100 degrees for a time of approximately 10 minutes.
10. The method of claim 1 wherein the *Ceratomia catalpae* larvae are packaged in containers to limit the presence of oxygen and are frozen in the containers.
11. The method of claim 10 wherein the containers comprise vacuum sealing plastic bags.
12. The method of claim 11 wherein the *Ceratomia catalpae* larvae are separated into batches smaller than when blanched when sealed in plastic bags and frozen, and wherein the multiple plastic bags layers are used to reduce freezer burn.
13. The method of claim 1 wherein a batch of harvested *Ceratomia catalpae* larvae are separated into smaller batches prior to the blanching step.
14. The method of claim 1 wherein harvested *Ceratomia catalpae* larvae are cooled prior to cleaning to limit physical activity during further processing.
15. The method of claim 1 wherein the harvested *Ceratomia catalpae* larvae are refrigerated at a temperature of 50-55 degrees for approximately two hours after harvesting and before cleaning to limit physical activity during further processing.
16. The method of claim 1 wherein the *ceratomia catalpae* larvae are preserved without addition of chemical preservatives.
17. A method of preserving *Ceratomia catalpae* larva without the use of chemical additives with an extended freezer life that is comprised of:
- a) harvesting the larvae from the group of trees comprising deciduous *Catalpa speciosa*, *Catalpa bignonioides*, *Catalpa ovata* (also known as *Catalpa kaempferi*) and *Catalpa bungei* trees, and refrigerating the harvested *Ceratomia catalpae* larva for approximately 2 hours to limit their physical activity;

- b) pre rinsing the said larvae in a bucket, so that the frass of the larvae falls to the bottom of the bucket;
- c) hand picking debris, including leaves or sticks out of the the larvae that may have accumulated during harvesting;
- 5 d) rinsing the larvae in a sink as to limit the amount of bacteria present on the worms, and clean off any frass still left on the caterpillars;
- e) introducing live larvae to a blanch bath of rolling/boiling water for approximately 10-15 seconds to reduce any microbiological activity present on the worms, brighten the color of the worms, and slightly toughen the outer skin of the larvae
- 10 and to kill the larvae;
- f) placing the larvae processed in step (e) in a bath of cold ice water for 15-20 seconds to cool the larvae and to limit cooking;
- h) placing larvae on a drying rack to limit the amount of water left on the larvae when frozen, the drying process including at least one of the steps of blotting the larvae
- 15 dry with paper towels, and drying the larvae in an oven;
- i) utilizing sterile instruments to place between ten and twelve dried larvae into a plastic bag to limit vapor and moisture transfer and sealing the bags with a heat sealer;
- j) placing the individual bags into larger bags to limit the amount of moisture loss, and to exclude oxygen while in the freezer.
- 20 h) freezing the larvae.
18. A package of fresh water fishing bait comprising:
a container substantially impervious to oxygen; and
frozen *Ceratomia catalpae* larvae enclosed in the container, the frozen *Ceratomia catalpae* larvae exhibiting substantially the same coloring as live *Ceratomia catalpae*
- 25 larvae and exhibiting the scent of live *Ceratomia catalpae* larvae, when thawed, and having skin exhibiting substantially the same toughness as the skin of live *Ceratomia catalpae* larvae;
- the frozen *Ceratomia catalpae* larvae exhibiting an absence of moisture not present in live *Ceratomia catalpae* larvae and an absence of chemical preservatives.
- 30 19. The package of claim 18 wherein the frozen *Ceratomia catalpae* larvae have a length of between three and four inches.

20. The package of claim 18 wherein the frozen *Ceratomia catalpae* larvae are packaged in a container comprising a vacuum bag.